CIA Stops Sending Daily Report to Hill

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The Central Intelligence Agency has dropped the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees from the exclusive readership that receives a top-secret publication called the National Intelligence Daily.

In taking the action in mid-January, the CIA effectively shut off Congress from access to the daily bulletin which CIA analysts prepare to brief top-level government officials on major political developments throughout the world.

The CIA action prompted a letter of protest from Foreign Relations Committee chairman Sen. John J. Sparkman (D-Ala.) and ranking minority member Sen. Clifford P. Case (R-N.J.).

The episode, which comes, ironically, at a time when Congress is seeking more oversight of the intelligence agencies, is apparently an outgrowth of what a Ford administration official condemned as "the present atmosphere of massive disclosures of classified information by Congress."

That wording was used by then-CIA Director William E. Colby in a letter Jan. 26 to Sparkman and Case explaining the basis for refusing them continued access to the National Intelligence Daily.

Colby's letter agreed with the claim of the two senators that no information coming from the Daily ever leaked from the committee. The leaks that did occur, he went on, all concerned covert operations.

Then, the former director made his remark about the atmosphere of "massive disclosures" on Capitol Hill and said that he took "little

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comfort" in the distinction between leaks of analytical intelligence information and those concerned with covert operations.

Colby's letter, which bears no security classification but which is being kept private within the committee, advised Case and Sparkman that the Intelligence Daily often contained explicit references that identified explicit foreign intelligence sources.

In the event of any "inadvertent public references" to this information, he went on, "I could be hard put to explain (to the sources) . . . that their cooperation was being revealed to Congress."

Colby offered to supply, in place of the National Intelligence Daily, a document called the Intelligence Check List which he said included articles selected from drafts prepared for the Daily. The former director's letter concluded with the perhaps unintentionally wry observation that "I gather from your letter that the committee finds our intelligence product useful."

The cutoff of the intelligence digest was the second unpublicized action by the CIA to deny the report, which resembles an offset tabloid newspaper, to the Foreign Relations Committee.

The last incident occurred in March, 1974, during the defeat of Phnom Penh government forces in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge (Cambodian Communists).

In the course of an executive session briefing by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield (D-Mont.) mentioned an intelligence development from Thailand that he gleaned that morning from the daily digest. Kissinger's reaction, according to several committee sources, was one of exasperation that information he had just acquired from the report was already shared with Congress.

Almost immediately the Intelligence Daily was cut off and only resumed several weeks later after the written protest of senior Foreign Relations committee members.

Several congressional sources speculated that the current cutoff resulted from an inadvertent public mention in December by Sparkman of classified sums of money being provided through the CIA to factions fighting the Soviet-backed forces in the Angolan civil war.

Sparkman alluded to a $3 million CIA reserve fund, which figured in covert financial assistance to the U.S.-favored Angolan force. A reporter, who presumably had been given a briefing of her own, corrected him and gave the precise figure of $3.2 million. The incident occurred after a private senatorial briefing with Kissinger just before the Christmas recess in mid-December.

"What is curious about this entire episode," observed one Senate official, "is that with rare exception, none of the members were ever interested in reading the Daily."

The document was furnished each day by the CIA to the Foreign Relations Committee chief of staff Pat Holt for review by any member. It was returned to the agency each afternoon — more often that not, unread.